finalized its recommendations on ERC report. Formulation of new pricing policy for urea units based on GoM's recommendations for replacing the existing Retention Price Scheme is under consideration of the Government. The proposed policy will be in the shape of Group Concession Scheme and is proposed to be introduced w.e.f-. 1.4.2003. The new policy will aim at greater transparency, uniformity and efficiency in subsidy disbursements to urea units and will induce urea manufacturers to take cost reduction measures on their own and be competitive.

Closure of Barauni and Durgapur Fertilizer units

3155. MISS MABEL REBELLO:

SHRI B.J. PANDA:

Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is proposed to close down fertilizer units at Durgapur and Barauni; if so, the reasons for their closure;

(b) how the staff of both these units would be adjusted, after the closure; and

(c) how much would VRS cost to the exchequer?

THE MINISTER OF STATE INTHE MINISTRY OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRITAPAN SIKDAR): (a)Yes, Sir, the Government have decided to close down Hindustan Fertilizer Corporation Ltd. including Durgapur and Barauni units as the same have not been found techno-economically viable.

(b) and (c) The employees of the Durgapur and Barauni units have been offered benefits under the Voluntary Separation Scheme, costing about Rs. 135 crore.

Production of Bio-Fertilizers

†3156. SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA: Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that now-a-days emphasis is on bio-fertilizers all over the world;

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) if so, the percentage of bio-fertilizers out of the total quantum of fertilizers being utilised in India; and

(c) the action being taken by Government to enhance the use of bio-fertilizers and to increase production thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE INTHE MINISTRY OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS: (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) and (b) Bio-fertilizers are being recognized as an important source of plant nutrient to supplement the chemical fertilizers. However, at present they constitute a small percentage of the total plant nutrients used in the country.

(c) For enhancing the production and use of bio-fertilizers, the Government has provided financial assistance for setting up of bio-fertilizer units, formulated standards of important bio-fertilizers for ensuring their quality and is promoting the use of bio-fertilizers through extension, training and field demonstrations.

Privatisation of vehicle repair and pollution checks

3157. PROF. M. SANKARALINGAM: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the recommendations of experts to privatise vehicle repair and pollution checks;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) what are the main recommendations of experts in this regard;

(d) whether the Ministry is considering implementation of the same; and

(e) if so, whether the Ministry has set any time-frame for the same?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) to (e)The Expert Committee on Auto Fuel Policy set up by the Government of India has suggested a road map for reducing vehicular pollution. For reduction of pollution from in-use vehicles, the Committee in its report has suggested inspection, maintenance and certification system to replace the existing Pollution Under Control (PUC) system and establishment of repair shop or centres authorised by the vehicle manufacturers who can ensure necessary quality control checks.

No final decision on the recommendations has been taken as yet.